Dr. Lori A. Watson grew up in Greenville Mississippi, where she was profoundly influenced by the leaders and educators in her family. Her father was the proprietor of the first “negro-owned” commercial laundry in the state of Mississippi and her uncle was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Alabama. Early on Lori learned the value of pride and perseverance and through the nurturing of both her mother and aunt who were both teachers, she learned the importance of education.

After high school graduation, Lori received her B.A. in Health and Physical Education from Tougaloo College, a Historically Black College in Tougaloo, MS. There she was a captain of the women’s basketball team joined Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She received an M.S.Ed. in Health, Physical Education and Recreation from Jackson State University, also a Historically Black College. Most recently Lori earned her Ed.D. from California State University East Bay in Hayward, CA. Her doctoral dissertation topic was, “Wow, they care right?” Making Schools Safe® for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students.

During her twenty-plus years as an educator, Lori has been a teacher, coach, and site administrator at both the middle and high school levels. While a site administrator, she was actively engaged with the District’s Equity team, facilitating seminars nationally. She also worked with the district leadership to head the district Safe Schools Task Force which was responsible for developing and implementing policies, programs and practices in the district’s schools to support LGBTQ students.

What calls me to do this work?

I do this work because I believe in this work. And I believe in this work because I believe that it changes lives. I believe that it changes the lives of the educators I work with in seminar, but most importantly I believe that it changes the lives of the students that they work with. Because when educators go back into their schools equipped with elevated levels of racial consciousness, along with the tools to interrupt systemic racism, then the trajectory of the lives of the students they work with, particularly their students of color, is changed—it’s changed forever.